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# RESTAURANTS TO REMEMBER

BOB FLOURY, Editor

**THEATERS** ★  
**NIGHT LIFE** ★  
**ENTERTAINMENT** ★



## RESTAURANT OF THE WEEK PORTOFINO INN

If you're tired of chicken a la king, pot roast and fried chicken, the inevitable fare at a club luncheon, shake hands with **Mary Hauser**. Miss Hauser booked and waded through so many of those pedestrian lunches and dinners when she was an executive secretary that she became sick of them. Now on behalf of rubber chicken sufferers everywhere, she's fighting back.

The tall, brown-haired former sports car club official and Economy Run driver is in charge of the kitchen at **Portofino Inn** in Redondo Beach. She also takes personal charge of arranging meals for special parties. Don't expect to dine on leathery ham, assembly line-prepared steak or heavily gravied dishes like beef stroganoff if you are in a party of 15 or more persons booked into Portofino. Miss Hauser will refuse to serve the kind of fare many groups have become resigned to accepting.

She'll figure out a way to serve any group a gourmet meal—at the same prices a special party might expect to pay elsewhere for chicken fried steak or other run-of-the-mill fare. Food for a stag affair will be treated differently than a meal for a women's club.

"Men want something hearty, chewy, with deep color," Miss Hauser believes. "Women go for the fine sauces, attractive salads and lighter dishes."

One men's party this week was served this banquet: For hors d'Oeuvres, Mozzarella frittata, with crisp vegetables (carrots, celery and cauliflower) and a dip. The salad, shrimp remoulade, was a connoisseur's treat. The main course consisted of extra thick slices of prime rib, including the bone, baked potato individually garnished and a Portofino specialty, vegetable curry.

If Miss Hauser had her way, dishes like vegetable curry would eventually replace that banquet standby, peas and carrots. It is a combination of lima beans, cauliflower, leeks ("not onions, I mean real leeks") and green beans cooked in butter. Curry is sprinkled lightly over each serving to top off the hybrid dish. A wine was served, of course, and the bread was another Portofino specialty, Greek Kullura.

"The party asked for cheesecake, which we served, but I would rather have given them fresh fruits and cheeses, and another wine," Miss Hauser recalled. Gourmet cooking is the standard in the kitchens where Miss Hauser and five cooks prepare meals for an average of 300 diners every day. "The biggest element in gourmet cooking is labor, plus imagination and a lot of cookbooks," she said. One of the culinary "Bibles" of the kitchen staff is the **Vincent Price Cookbook**, and the shelves are crowded with gourmet magazines and books.

Even in the Oar Room coffee shop such delicacies as Colcannon, Toad in a Hole, Buttered Pasta with Shrimp and Mushroom and Hot Avocado Stuffed with Crab are likely to appear regularly on the menu. Serving of Greek bread and an hors d'Oeuvres tray to Portofino Lounge dinner patrons is the contribution of **Maitre d'Hotel Markos**.

Regular customers of the lounge can attest to the imagination and flair with which dinners are served. But ask the man who is used to struggling with wilted salad and flat coffee at the service club luncheon, what he would like to have set in front of him. If he replies kalvifilet oskar, curried scallops or beef belmont, send him to Portofino. He'll find a soul mate in Mary Hauser, and she writes the menu.

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**FAMOUS DUO . . . Gil and Nikki**, who have their own show at the brand new Barbary Coast Room of the Mariner Hotel in Torrance, will be the beginning of a long line of music and comedy units to play the spot from Las Vegas and Reno hotels. The Gil and Nikki show, composed of seven musicians, comics and dancers, will be featured in continuous shows nightly in the Barbary Coast Room.

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A GOOD PLACE all youngsters intrigued, is a perfect place for children to take their parents for dinner in the Smith Bros. Indian Village Restaurant in Torrance. Special children's dishes are listed on wigwam-shaped menus and the tribal atmosphere, designed to keep all youngsters intrigued, is a "fun place" for diners of all ages. To parents, the Indian Village is a dining adventure, to children this unusual restaurant is a sight-seeing experience. (Continued on Next Page)

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## CASTAGNOLA'S Lobster House

The opening of the new **Castagnola Lobster House** in the **King Harbor Marina of Redondo Beach, California** marks a new milestone in the success story of a prominent Santa Barbara family. The restaurant is the largest in a growing chain of five, with others in the planning stage.

The story of how these fine establishments came about is a fascinating one and is made up of equal parts of courageous adventure and solid business acumen . . . a mixture that has built a fortune from modest beginnings. That beginning was in Santa Barbara, where a family of seafaring folk with the name of **Castagnola** established a business supplying fresh seafood to markets in the area. Soon they were extending their sales to surrounding cities. Hardworking, adventurous, and enterprising, the members of the family divided up the labor so that some went to sea, and others stayed ashore handling the sales and business part of their expanding venture.

One day they had a large and unexpected surplus of lobsters—far more than the market could absorb. The **Castagnolas** set up a table on the waterfront and offered fresh, hot lobsters, cooked on the spot to passersby. In a few hours they had sold out the surplus and had to go out and catch more.

Rather than continue selling on the street, they put up a modest building with a counter, cooking pots and a few tables. Soon they added other seafoods to the lobster fare and made it a year-round business. So began the chain of **Castagnolas' Lobster Houses**. The first, in Santa Barbara, was followed by one in Ventura and another in Pasadena.

The **Castagnola** fishing fleet, sailing from the beautiful harbor of Santa Barbara, assures a continuous supply of the fresh seafood essential to the high standards of the menu of each of the **Lobster Houses**. Fresh-caught lobsters, fish and other seafood are quickly unloaded and processed in the **Castagnola** plant and rushed by refrigerated truck to each of the **Lobster House** Kitchens.

**Mario Castagnola** is president of the corporation. His son, **Tom Headley**, is Executive Vice President, handling the business management and spearheading expansion programs. **Dick Headley**, Mario's other son, carries on the seafaring tradition and is also responsible for the interior decorations and motif of all of the chain's restaurants. **Al Bulfone** is Vice President in charge of Restaurant Operations, supervising the preparation and serving of their famous seafoods.

Mario's father, **Gio Batta Castagnola** migrated from Italy and settled in Santa Barbara in 1905. In his work as a fisherman he was assisted by his five sons. As the business grew, they placed many other fishermen under contract. Today, Mario spends his time ashore, directing operations from a large office at the **Castagnola Seafood Company**, 131 Anacapa Street in Santa Barbara. He is an ardent collector of marine artifacts and is assisted in this by his son, **Dick**. They have salvaged ancient anchors to place in front of the restaurants along with carved figureheads from old clipper ships. Both seacoasts have been searched to find these picturesque mementos. Masts and rigging used as nautical decor in the **Redondo Beach Lobster House** are from the famous Clipper Ship "Star of India," now moored at San Diego's Embarcadero as a maritime museum. Decorating the walls of Mario's office are beautiful oil paintings by his talented wife, who has won many awards for her work under the signature of **Glady's Castagnola**. Her fine oils also hang on display in the restaurants.

Inside the **Lobster Houses**, the ship and sea motif is carried out in a very dramatic and authentic manner. Rising in the center of the main dining room is a mast complete with heavy ship's rigging. A giant ship's wheel adds to the impression of being on board an old clipper ship. All brass is highly polished and a soft glow comes from the wood of the tables, built as replicas of ships hatch covers.

With the dropping of the **Castagnola** anchor at **Redondo Beach** in the heart of the new **King Harbor Marina**, the largest restaurant of the chain will emerge. It will house a dinner house, cocktail lounge and coffee shop on the ground floor, with banquet and club facilities upstairs overlooking the harbor. Reservations for the finest in food, fun and entertainment at the **Lobster House** can be made by phoning manager **Charles Bray** at 376-0981.

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